



## **Introduction: International Comparisons - France, Georgia, Lithuania and Russia**

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## INTRODUCTION

# INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS – FRANCE, GEORGIA, LITHUANIA AND RUSSIA\*

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This special issue is devoted to recent changes in families in France, Georgia, Lithuania and Russia. The changes involve three major sets of factors: the anthropological dimension shown by patterns of intra-family relationships in the four countries; the political dimension, since each of the four has its own special history (three of them sharing a history over various periods); and an economic and social dimension, which constrains or frees demographic trajectories and is itself a combination of long-term transnational and national trends. The value of this arrangement is more heuristic than demonstrative. It is intended to place the various papers within the general framework of demographic change and provides a view of the main trends revealed by the composite indicators and measurements recorded by the GGS (Generations and Gender Surveys)<sup>1</sup> carried out from 2004 to 2006 using a common questionnaire in the four countries selected (see Appendices 1 and 2).

The trends measured by the composite indicators reflect long-term demographic histories in which countries converge or diverge, the immediate demographic effects of public policy, and the effects of more general political and social history. The measurements, based on statistical household surveys, offer a different perspective, with both synchronous and diachronous elements and details of family formation. They reveal changes in behaviour that the usual indicators do not measure. They can be used to monitor in detail how families are constituted and to identify noticeably different practices beneath demographic trends that may appear to be equivalent or convergent.

### 1. WHY THESE FOUR COUNTRIES?

The selection of countries for this study may appear surprising. What do France, Georgia, Lithuania and Russia have in common to justify including them in the same analysis, without studying, say, Germany, Italy or Spain? The first reason is a practical one: four of the various research teams who carried out the same survey were used to working together, and furthermore were ready to share the data they had collected. But that is not the main reason. The purpose of these studies is to compare a set of countries that long shared a common political and economic history, but with quite distinct cultural history and anthropological patterns, against another country, France, that had not shared that common history. This comparison

makes it possible to estimate the role of socio-cultural and more political determining factors in the demographic changes we are studying.

It may be thought regrettable not to have included two other countries, one from Western Europe (Germany or Italy, say) and one from Central and Eastern Europe, such as the Czech Republic or Bulgaria, which were under Soviet political influence until 1989 and are now Member States of the European Union. The absence of these countries is due to the fact that it was not possible during the research period to have access to their GGS data<sup>2</sup>.

Historically, Russia and Georgia shared a common political territory from the 19th century as the various kingdoms and principalities that make up Georgia's present territory were gradually absorbed by the Russian Empire, during the conquest of Transcaucasia that lasted from 1801 to 1878. After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the short-lived independent Transcaucasian Federation, created in 1918, Georgia was independent for only a short time from 1918 before becoming a Soviet republic. Lithuania declared its independence at the time of the Russian Revolution, after being part of the Tsarist Empire, but was re-absorbed into the Soviet Union under the German-Soviet Pact of 1939.

All three countries, like France, share a common historical experience, namely a 20th century marked by the Second World War, whose consequences and sequels were widely different for each of them: Russia was a major actor; its losses, especially military, were huge. Lithuania was annexed by the USSR in 1940, invaded by Germany in 1941 and then returned to the Soviet Union. It suffered massive deportation to Siberia beginning in 1939, which continued after the retreat of German forces, the extermination of its Jewish population during German occupation, and the instability of the immediate post-war years, with various forms of resistance to Soviet occupation. Georgia in its present borders was an integral part of the USSR. It took part in the war but did not lose as many people as Russia and Lithuania. France's loss of life was far less than that of these three countries, but the country was still deeply marked by the Second World War.

After 1945, the four countries selected for this study found themselves on two sides as part of the post-war polarisation of Europe until 1991. At this date the Soviet pole disintegrated: Lithuania was the first country of the former USSR to declare its independence, on 11 March 1990. Georgia then quickly declared its own, on 9 April 1991. Not until the USSR dissolved on 25 December 1991 did their independence become effective, enabling these

1. The Generations and Gender Project (GGP) was launched in 2000 by the Population Activities Unit (PAU) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The first wave of a three-part series of international surveys (Generations and Gender Surveys) were carried out for the project, with data already collected from Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania and Russia. For details, <http://www.unece.org/pau/ggp/Welcome.html>

2. Of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which were under Soviet influence after the Second World War, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary carried out a GGS survey. Germany and Italy, in Western Europe, did the same. We had hoped to have access to the German data, but this was not possible before the end of the research period.

countries to assume autonomous existence. The newly independent states undertook policies of radical change with widely varying results. Georgia, unlike some other former Soviet republics, did not achieve political stability. Lithuania, on the other hand, joined the European Union on 1 May 2004.

The comparison we make reflects anthropological and cultural dimensions of each country's long-term history. The situations observable now, rather than past trends, reveal these diversities. The anthropological dimension covers those factors perceived in the relations between men and women and in family values, particularly those relating to marriage and the differentiation of gender roles. This anthropological dimension contributes to the formation of spaces organised along religious, family and cultural lines, combining in institutions such as marriage. In this respect, each of the four countries displays widely different and internally varying patterns. Lithuania may well be firmly situated within a Catholic tradition that links it with Poland, with which it shared a common history centuries ago. But it is also linked in a more complex manner with the Germanic and Scandinavian areas of Europe. These effects could be seen when Soviet Lithuania stood apart not only from Russia, but also from the other two Baltic countries, Estonia and Latvia. For example, abortion and divorce were less frequent than in the other two. Georgia, again, may well belong to the Caucasus but it is still different from its neighbours, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The highly patriarchal dimension in family relations remains strong and marks relations within the couple, the formation of unions and forms of mutual aid.

Family relationships in Russia are also marked by patriarchal patterns, but less than in Georgia, and the divergences are greater. However, the early date of the formation of unions and first births seems to be a double effect of a Soviet socio-economic past, with its housing shortages and special forms of cohabitation between generation, and of older, deeper reasons reflecting the Hajnal Line<sup>3</sup> dividing a zone to the east of early marriage and complex family structures from a zone to the west of late marriage and nuclear families. Naturally, this pattern is now nuanced or even contested, but Russia does appear to retain a particular pattern: early family formation and frequent intergenerational relations.

Last but not least, France is marked by different forms of mutual aid and relationships between relatives, closer to the nuclear family, leading to less intergenerational aid than in Russia and Georgia. The types of relationship established within the circle of relatives are not patriarchal or patrilocal but much more symmetrical.

3. The Hajnal line divides a zone of early marriage and complex family structures to the east from a zone of late marriage and nuclear families to the west. Cf. Burguière *et al.*, *Histoire de la Famille*, Stock, Paris, (1986) 1994.

The third, socio-economic, dimension is related to the differences between education systems, operation of the labour market, social stratification, housing access, social policy of financial support for families, and even differentials in the access to healthcare and birth control. It also covers the country's social and economic organisation: social stratification, operating rules of the labour market, access to housing, etc.

Of the four, only France has had a market economy for most of its recent history. The other three had 50 or 70 years of an authoritarian regime in which the economy was planned and access to employment strictly defined by the State. Life histories and occupational careers were circumscribed by a system of social protection whereby unemployment did not officially exist and the employer might well provide services and accommodation for their staff. The State took over part of family life with a network of crèches and kindergartens it had created. At the same time, the State paradoxically encouraged families to develop intergenerational solidarity, which was supposed to make up for the inadequate supply of housing and basic consumer goods, especially food, typical of a shortage economy.

In the early 1990s, the upheavals in the three East European countries involved first the liberalisation of the economy. This led, among other things, to a considerable rise in the cost of living, as state aid to families dwindled and the system of social institutions (crèches, hospitals, etc.) fell into disrepair. However, the three countries soon took different paths. After a decade of chaos, Russia and Lithuania began to benefit from the changes. The Russian economy strengthened in the first years after 2000 as a result of the rise in commodity prices on international markets, key resources for a country exporting raw materials, and the Lithuanian economy gained from membership of the European Union in 2004. Georgia was an exception, making no economic progress in the absence of new opportunities, not to mention the heavy burden of the wars of independence (Abkhazia, Adzharia, South Ossetia).

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

The sources used in this research are of two sorts: first, selected composite demographic indicators taken from national censuses or surveys. These are used to follow diachronic trends and position our analysis within the usual practice for observing demographic change over the years. The second main source is an international survey, the "Generation and Gender Surveys" (GGS). Based on a United Nations initiative, these surveys are longitudinal. The idea is that three successive waves are carried out at three-year intervals in all participating countries, including the four in this study. The data on which the papers are based are taken from the first sur-

vey wave carried out in 2004 in Russia, 2005 in France and 2006 in Georgia and Lithuania. The main advantage of this survey for the four countries under study, in 2004 for Russia and 2006 for Lithuania, is that it is based on a questionnaire with a common core for all participating countries. This core questionnaire, in English, was the reference, and the sample sizes and structures were also precisely defined in order to achieve homogeneity and comparability (see Appendix 1 and 2).

Nevertheless, some divergences remain, as a result of survey practice in each country, and also the impossibility of achieving strict equivalence between the wording of the questions, since even if a question is translated in strictly equivalent terms, the meaning may differ between countries<sup>4</sup>.

TABLE 1  
*Selected demographic parameters (totals in thousands)*

Country	France	Georgia	Lithuania	Russia
Population (1990) <sup>a</sup>	56,577	5,424	3,694	147,662
Population (2000) <sup>a</sup>	58,849	4,672*	3,512	145,559
Population (1/1/2005) <sup>a</sup>	60,825	4,321	3,425	143,474
Population (1/1/2006) <sup>a</sup>	61,167	4,401	3,403	142,221
Births (2005) <sup>a</sup>	767	50	30	1,502
Births (2006) <sup>a</sup>	774	48	31	1,480
Total fertility rate (2005) <sup>b</sup>	198	139	130	130
Deaths (2005) <sup>a</sup>	507	43	44	2,294
Deaths (2006) <sup>a</sup>	520	42	45	2,167
Life expectancy at birth (M - 2006) <sup>c</sup>	77.2	69.8	65.3	60.4
Life expectancy at birth (F - 2006) <sup>c</sup>	84.0	78.5	77.1	73.2
Natural increase (2006) <sup>a</sup>	280	5.5	-13.5	-687.1
Balance of migration (2006) <sup>a</sup>	115	-12.1	-4.9	154.5
Total increase (2006) <sup>a</sup>	395	-6.6	-18.4	-532.6

a: In thousands; b: children per 100 women; c: in years

\* Estimated, since the authorities did not have access to data from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Without these two regions, the population was 4.435m in 2000, 4.289m in 2005

Sources: National statistical yearbooks and INED database ([http://www.ined.fr/pop\\_chifres](http://www.ined.fr/pop_chifres))

4. See P. Sebille & A. Régnier-Lolier, *Aménagements du questionnaire Génération et Gender Surveys en France (vague 1)*, Ined, coll. "Documents de travail", N° 144, Paris, 2007, 191 p.

First let us place the countries under study within their general demographic context. Their population sizes vary widely, of course, from Russia with close to 144 million and France nearly half Russia (about 61 million) to Georgia and Lithuania, each below 5 million. Demographic trends are also different. The French population continues to grow, mainly by natural increase but also by migration, whereas the population of the other three countries is declining as a result of high mortality, exacerbated in Georgia and Lithuania by substantial emigration. Russia stands out for its population decline over many years, attenuated by immigration, mainly of Russians from the former Soviet republics. In these countries migration is a crucial factor. Many families in Georgia and Lithuania are now split up by an emigration not of families but mainly of men going to work in Western Europe, especially the British Isles, for the Lithuanians, and in Russia for the Georgians.

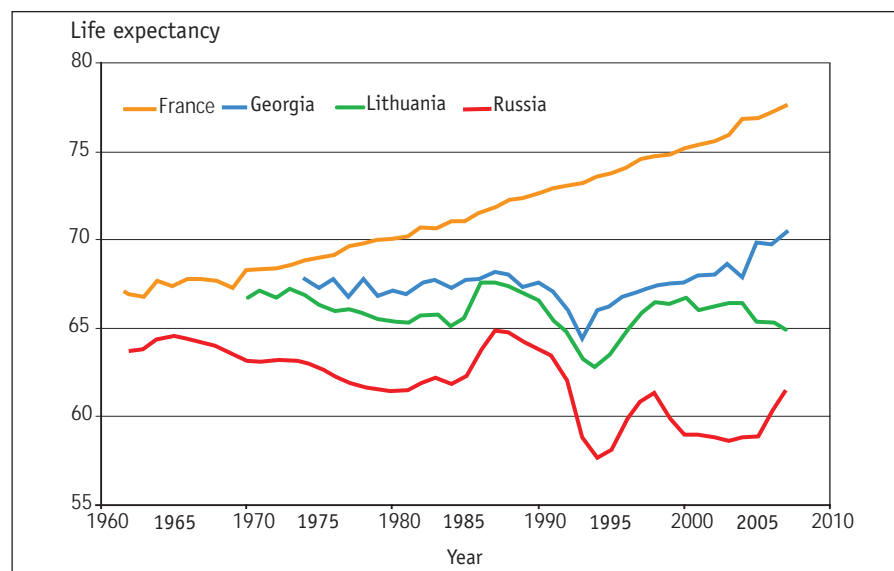
Soviet history even affected behaviour concerning people's lives and deaths. This history persists even now in terms of health and mortality (Figure 1). Whereas in the early 1960s the Soviet republics and Western countries were fairly similar in these areas, a sharp divergence appeared at the start of the 1970s, when all the countries of Western Europe began a radical change in health policies, particularly for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer control. These countries' mortality declined rapidly and, not least, regularly. Conversely, the mortality of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet republics increased, with a continual decline in life expectancy. Furthermore, the short-term changes were remarkably synchronous, demonstrating the sensitivity of various components of the USSR to specific measures: accelerated deterioration throughout the USSR in the mid-1970s, interruption and sudden improvement in the mid-1980s, following draconian laws against alcoholism (close to prohibition), then synchronous fluctuations as a consequence of a return to the previous situation by damped oscillation<sup>5</sup>. Then the parallel nature of these trends, fluctuations and oscillations, following Soviet developments year by year with remarkable unanimity, suddenly broke down when the Soviet Union collapsed, showing how far the changes in mortality were the consequence of belonging to a region that had shared a common political history and the same state. The divergence of mortality trends appeared in the early 1990s in most of the countries of Central Europe, which rapidly emerged from a long stagnation of their mortality rates. Lithuania moved apart from the Russian trend from the mid-1990s, but not markedly. From the end of the 1980s, Russia's life expectancy fell

5. For the interpretation of these fluctuations, see A. Avdeev, A. Blum, S. Zakharov & E. Andreev, "Réaction d'une population hétérogène à une perturbation. Un modèle d'interprétation des évolutions de la mortalité en Russie", *Population*, vol. 52, n° 1, 1997, pp. 7-44.



sharply and has only shown weak signs of improvement after the sharp fall of the 1990s.

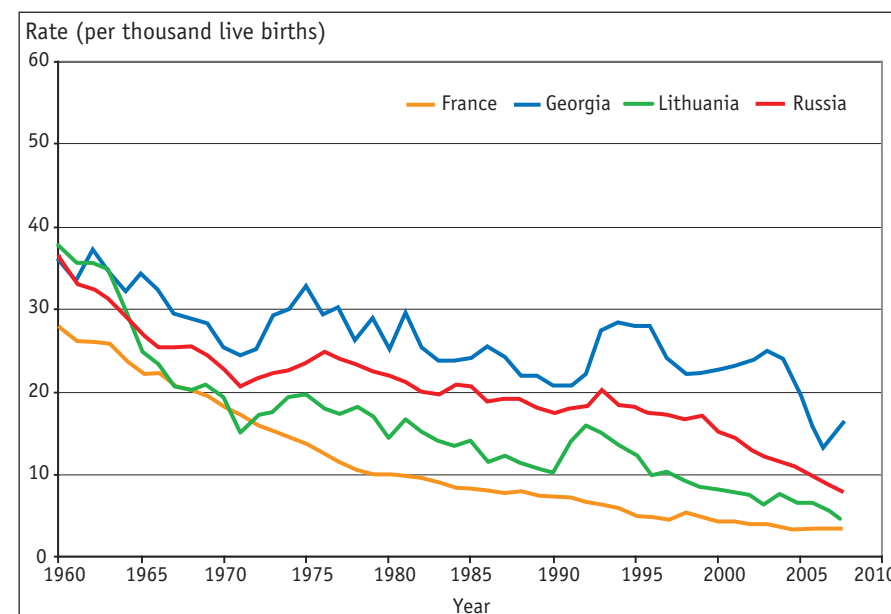
FIGURE 1  
*Male life expectancy at birth (1960-2005)*



Sources: National statistical yearbooks and INED Population database ([http://www.ined.fr/pop\\_chiffres](http://www.ined.fr/pop_chiffres)).

Trends in infant mortality confirm these common then separate developments, although they involve some difficulties in interpretation as a result of simple questions of statistical measurement (Figure 2). For many years, the nature of the indicator used to measure the infant mortality rate in the USSR was controversial. It is now known that this measurement, which excluded a certain number of perinatal deaths that were included elsewhere in Europe, underestimated the actual figure. It is also accepted that part of the rise observed everywhere in the mid-1970s was the consequence of improved registration due to a monitoring campaign carried out by the statistics directorate. So some synchronous movements were more the result of alterations in measurement than real changes; the rise in infant mortality in Lithuania and Estonia after 1991 is the consequence of the use of international standards for measuring it. Nevertheless, the general trend is downward, except in Georgia.

FIGURE 2  
*Infant mortality rate (1960-2005)*



Sources: National statistical yearbooks and INED Population database ([http://www.ined.fr/pop\\_chiffres](http://www.ined.fr/pop_chiffres)).

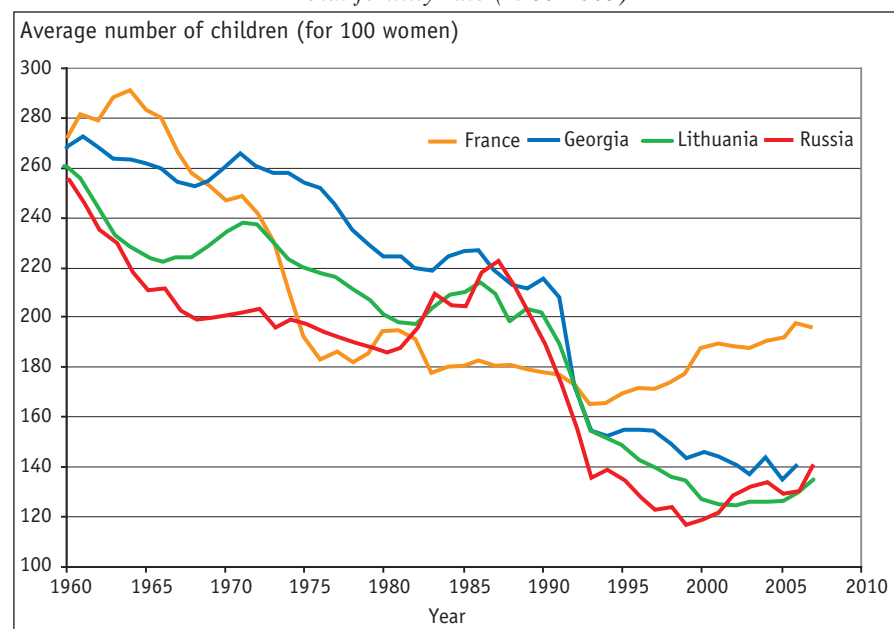
The synchronous fertility trends in the three former Soviet republics are due to the combined effect of historical, political and economic factors, while the different levels are more the effect of cultural and anthropological factors (Figure 3). During the 1980s, while most European countries (except France) had declining fertility, the figures for Georgia, Lithuania and Russia remained high. The trace left by the paternalistic Soviet State explains the symmetry of trends in these three countries, enhanced by the pronatalist policy adopted in 19816, the date when fertility rose. These mainly affected birth timing – bringing childbearing forward – rather than completed fertility by cohort<sup>7</sup>. The steep decline that followed, in Russia, Estonia and Latvia, is also due to catching up. The context of economic, political and social crisis in the 1990s most probably played a part in the immediate decline in the birth rate during this period. This decreased fertility intensity was accompanied by the first signs of change in the timing

6. In particular, paid parental leave; A. Avdeev & A. Monnier, “À la découverte de la fécondité russe contemporaine”, *Population*, vol. 49, n° 4-5, 1994, pp. 859-901.

7. S. Zakharov, “Demografičeskij analiz efekta mer semejnoj politiki v Rossii 1980-kh gg.” (Demographic analysis of the effect of family policy measures in 1980s Russia), in T.M. Maleva & O.V. Sinjavskaja, eds., *Roditeli i deti, mužčiny i ženščiny v sem'e i obščestve* (Children and parents, men and women in family and society), volume 1, Moscow, NISP, 2007, pp. 267-312..

of the first birth. The very young age of mothers in the 1970s and 1980s gradually moved more closely to that elsewhere in Europe.

FIGURE 3  
*Total fertility rate (1960-2005)*



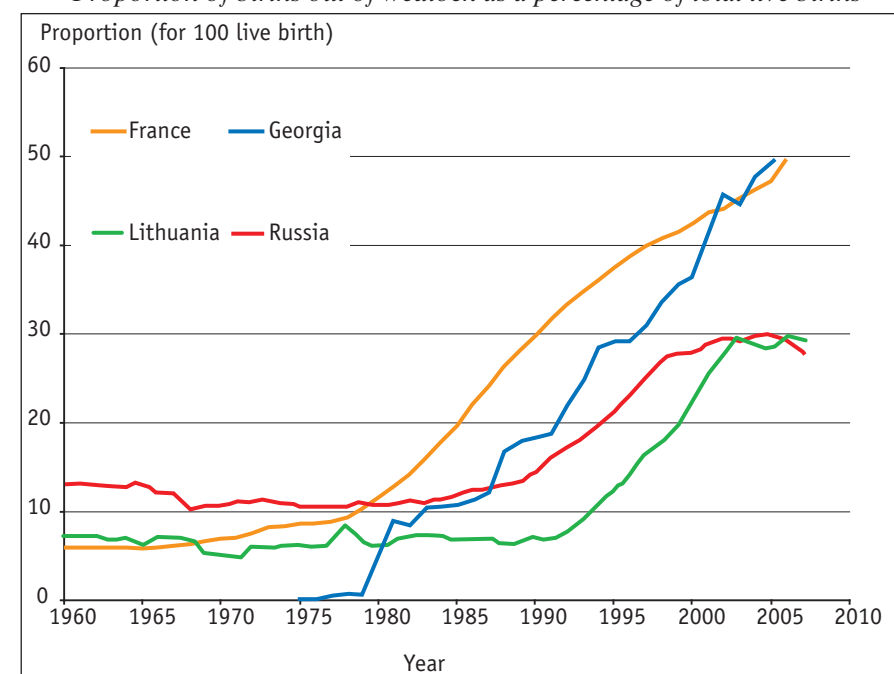
Sources: National statistical yearbooks and INED Population database ([http://www.ined.fr/pop\\_chiffres](http://www.ined.fr/pop_chiffres)).

The variations in levels are due to cultural and anthropological factors, particularly in Georgia and Lithuania in 1960-1990: the patriarchal family in one case and Catholicism in the other heavily affected family behaviour, especially marriage, where change is shown by the number of births out of wedlock (Figure 4). In the early 1960s in most European countries, a birth out of wedlock usually meant a birth outside a couple, often unwanted and unrecognised. At present, it means a child born to an informal union. The Scandinavian countries led this development and France followed a few years later. Currently in France, one birth in two occurs in an informal union and the fertility behaviour of married couples does not differ from that of other couples.

However, these changes also show the complex but real relationship between anthropological and political dimensions. In Estonia, for example, a country demographically identified as Scandinavian, informal unions developed quickly after the collapse of the USSR. Estonians' integration in the USSR had limited this trend for years but not prevented it entirely. In Lithuania, strong attachment to Catholic values had the effect of limiting the rise in out-of-wedlock births even more than in Estonia and the

USSR in general. Since 2007-2008, this clear cultural dimension has been combined with the emergence of a policy encouraging marriage, strongly marked by Catholic culture and offering married couples a privileged status compared to other couples. The rise in the number of births outside wedlock that began in the early 1990s then stopped. There remains the apparently unexpected phenomenon in Georgia, where the number of out-of-wedlock births has risen sharply. This is basically the consequence of a disaffection with registered civil marriage and a shift to private religious ceremonies<sup>8</sup>.

FIGURE 4  
*Proportion of births out of wedlock as a percentage of total live births*



Sources: National statistical yearbooks and INED Population database ([http://www.ined.fr/pop\\_chiffres](http://www.ined.fr/pop_chiffres)).

This section has outlined the main demographic trends in the four countries under study and shown their similarities and differences, but it needs to be complemented by a perspective approach to the anthropological, historical, social and economic factors that determine the major socio-demographic changes described in the nine articles. The GGS survey data are a rich source of information here.

8. I. Badurashvili, R. Cheishvili, E. Kapanadze, S. Tsiklauri & M. Sirbiladze, *Gender Relations in Modern Georgian Society*, UNFPA-GCPR, Tbilisi, 2008, 86 p.

### 3. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND DETERMINING FACTORS

#### 3.1 A CLEAR ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIMENSION – FAMILY MUTUAL AID AND COHABITATION

It is now established that family structures long retain the traces of patterns of intra-family relations subject to a clear anthropological dimension: the permanent features often override social and political changes<sup>9</sup>. For example, when housing conditions changed or rapid urbanisation and rural exodus brought into towns rural families for whom housing arrangements and degree of proximity among relatives were suddenly altered, the organisation of family life was modified. Forms of mutual aid took over from cohabitation. There was a shift from family patterns dominated by shared participation in housework, economically important farm work and partial pooling of resources (even if finances might still be controlled by the biological family), to a family organisation with new types of mutual aid, informal exchange, circulation of information from the extended family and other outside sources. A system emerged in which aid was once again mainly provided by the State. Whether for financial aid or tax allowances, family support or childcare, official channels were increasingly used, and support from the extended family was only a supplement to the aid offered by institutions.

It is particularly instructive to observe the situation in the successor states to the USSR, since they all comprise a widely proclaimed unified welfare state system superposed over traditional patterns of mutual aid that vary widely by region. The combination of or conflict between these patterns provides an indicator of how anthropological heritage copes with the development of more intrusive state paternalism. The confrontation between reality, often a survival economy, and stated support from the state, produces responses that involve exchanges of goods and services that are often monetary and “informal”<sup>10</sup>. These exchanges consist of providing a service to a particular person in the expectation of support in return, an indirect support that may occur through other networks. This is a form of insurance, a costly form because to obtain a service that is not determined in advance, the individual is obliged to provide services to a large number of people who may or may not provide support in the future. Although this form of generalised exchange is due to the inadequacies of the social protection and welfare state system, which cannot assume its functions in a stagnating economy, it is also superposed on ancient practices that under-

pin family, friendship and neighbourhood relations that differ between regions and communities.

One of these forms of exchange is of particular importance: family support. This is very important for men or women when they find themselves isolated, either single or widowed or divorced (Figure 5). In the case of divorce, family support usually means return to the parents' home or continued cohabitation. This is particularly true in Georgia, where cultural patterns of family organisation encourage the existence of complex households. Georgian men often live with their parents at whatever point in their marital history, whether single or in a couple. Although the proportion of men living with at least one parent declines with age, this is not so much the consequence of their leaving the parental home but rather of the parents dying.

In France, on the contrary, men only rarely live in the parental home, least of all after the age of thirty. Women do so slightly more, but once they have moved out, very few of them return to live with their parents, even after a divorce or widowhood. In France, leaving the parental home is therefore usually final, whether one lives as a couple or alone afterwards. In Lithuania, the behaviour of men and women in terms of leaving the parental home falls between the two. Moving out is final but constrained by the difficulties of access to housing and a stable income. So there are more men and women who live with their parents or parents-in-law after forming a union or marital breakdown. Russia also seems to occupy an intermediate position, with the emergence of renewed cohabitation imposed by the difficult economic conditions of the last decade.

Family organisation and cohabitation where it occurs also reveal the bonds that unite family members and the gender relations bound up with them. In Georgia, for example, the eldest son's care for his elderly parents is related to his responsibility within the sibling group. These relations defined within the family and the gender relations observed throughout society at large reflect an anthropological dimension that may be exacerbated by economic pressures, particularly during crises, when women leave the work market sooner and in greater numbers than men. Similarly, family and matrimonial practices are connected with the social status of men and women and the customs laid down by society.

In Georgia, marriage is not followed by a clear break between men and their families. The principle of patrilocal coresidence means that the husband stays with his parents and his wife joins him. Men's attachment to their parents' household is particularly noticeable in the sharp difference in men and women's behaviour after the end of a marriage. Whether widowhood, divorce or separation, men remain attached to their parents' home, and either stay there or return. Women are much more likely to live

9. Hervé Le Bras et Emmanuel Todd, *L'invention de la France. Atlas anthropologique et politique*, Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 1981.

10. Myriam Désert, « Le débat russe sur l'informel », *Questions de recherches*, n° 17, CERI/Sciences Po, n° 17, mai 2006 ; <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/cerifpublica/question/menu.htm>



away from their parents' home, whatever their marital situation once they have entered a union. This is without doubt one of the most characteristic features of Georgian family structure compared with the other three countries under study.

However, as we have shown, the family patterns revealed in coresidence between family members only reflect a part of the relationships between parents and children. Housing constraints and urban lifestyles may indeed modify family structures but do not radically modify the nature of the relationships between parents and children. Evidence of this can be seen in the frequency of children's visits to their parents (Figure 6). For example, in Georgia, family relationships are strongly marked by gender relations within the family. The priority relationship of men with their parents, as seen in the patrilocal family structure, is also seen in the visits men make to their parents. These are much more frequent among men than among women<sup>11</sup>.

### 3.2 ENTRANCE INTO ADULT LIFE

"Entrance into adult life", via a series of stages (leaving parental home, end of education, first job, first union, birth of first child) occurs in various orders, with discrepancies that indicate either a weak causal link or no link at all. These stages are not always strictly ordered either in a given country or over time. However, despite great variability and different order of stages, due to individual, social or economic factors, the similarities between these stages show that there are close correlations between these various points of entrance into adult life. For the oldest cohorts, there is a clear distinction between France and the other countries: the polarisation between East and West is sharply expressed. This reflects different relationships between the political and economic systems, particularly between access to employment and formation of the family.

During the period under study, the end of education in France is quickly followed by access to a first job, but for these cohorts it is not until some years later that respondent left the parental home. This move is the consequence of access to economic independence and adult status. It occurs when the conditions for independence are assured. This reasoning explains the remarkable stability of the median age of leaving the parental home (Figure 7). The combination of an economic system — economic independence required to leave the parental home — and a more anthropological one — ideas about the age of independence, partly explain the time elapsed between the end of education and access to a first job and between that and leaving the parental home.

The first stage in forming a family, marked by a first union, which for the pre-1960 cohorts is often a marriage, only occurs after the end of education, entrance to the labour market and leaving the parental home. It is quickly followed by the birth of a child conceived after the union. For the 1930s cohorts, who began their working lives just after the Second World War, the median ages indicate that there was more than 15 years between the end of education or access to a first job and the formation of a union or the birth of a first child. Three phenomena are strongly dissociated: an economic one, relating education and employment; a sociological one, namely the social representation of adulthood, determining the leaving of the parental home; and a demographic one, the social expression of the formation of the family, relating marriage and the birth of the first child.

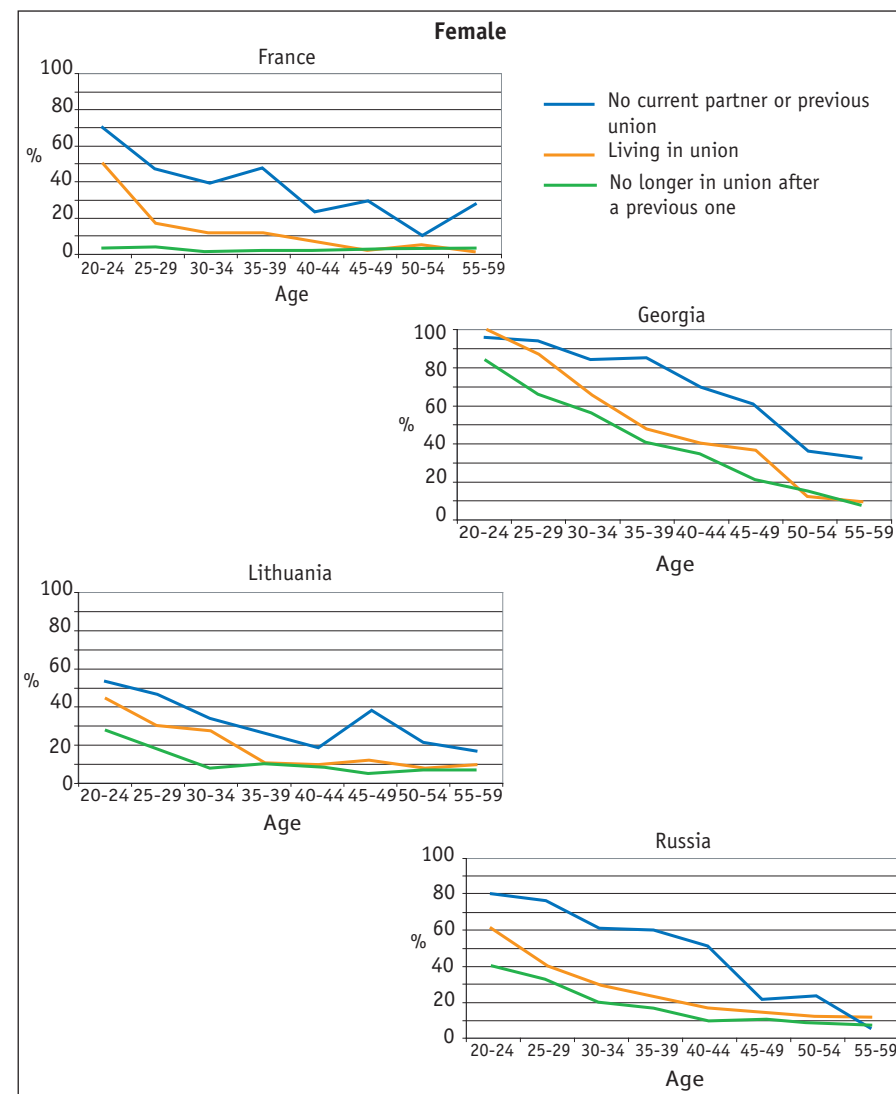
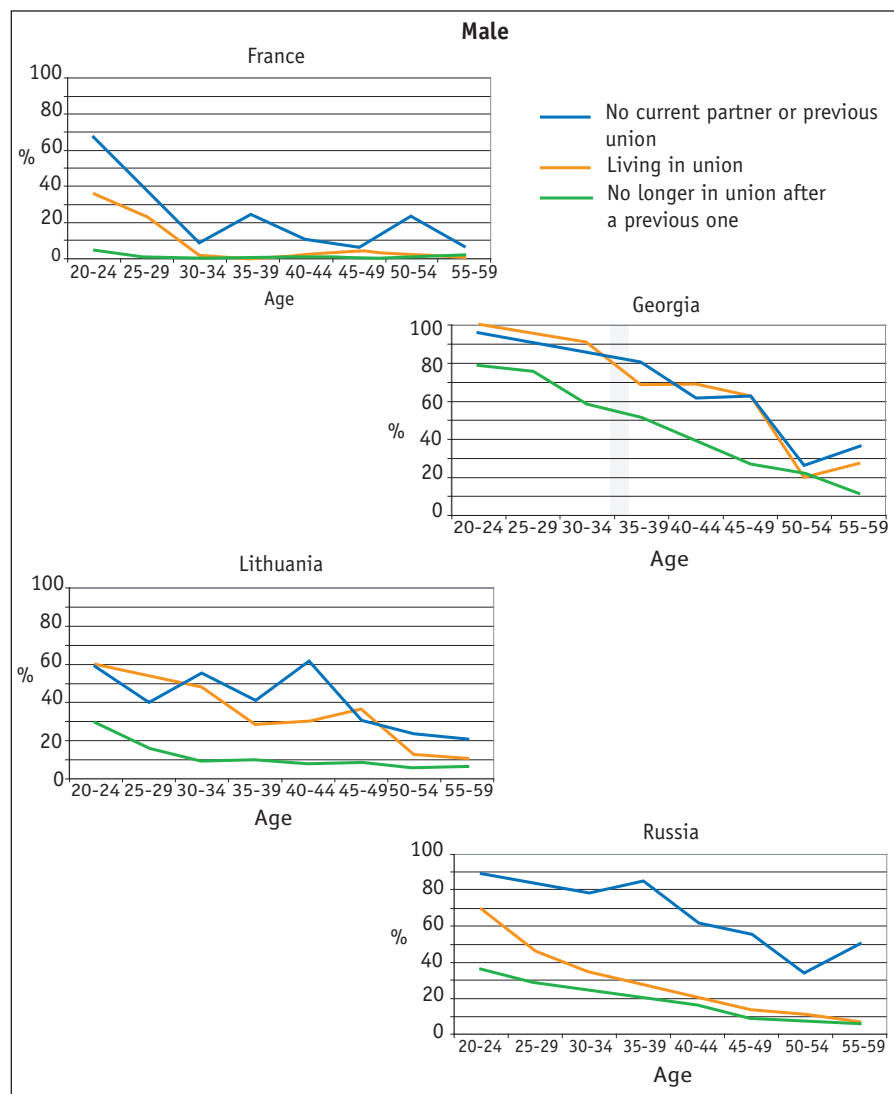
In the USSR the stages occur much more closely together and the order may change. Where the end of education and leaving the parental home are close events<sup>12</sup>, they are quickly followed by a first union and a first child. In Russia, for example, all the stages occur in less than five years, whereas in France they extend over more than ten. It is not unusual for the first union in Russia to be formed before the end of education and the first child to be born while the parents are still students. The gap is slightly larger in Lithuania and Georgia, because people leave the parental home sooner. The situation in Russia is evidence of more difficult housing conditions there than in the outlying republics of the Soviet Union. But in all the Soviet republics the state system of access to employment, education and relations between families and State broke down the dependence between the formation of a family and educational and professional careers. The distinction observed in France between the various stages in life history is erased. These forms of expression of adulthood occur over a shorter period, in an order that is not always the same, since a given stage may occur before or after another<sup>13</sup>.

12. In Russia, the survey did not contain a question on first job.

13. See the article in this issue by Pascal Sébille, Alain Blum and Serge Zakharov comparing Russia and France.

11. See the article in this issue by Arnaud Régnier-Loilier, Irina Badurashvili and Shorena Tsiklauri comparing France and Georgia.

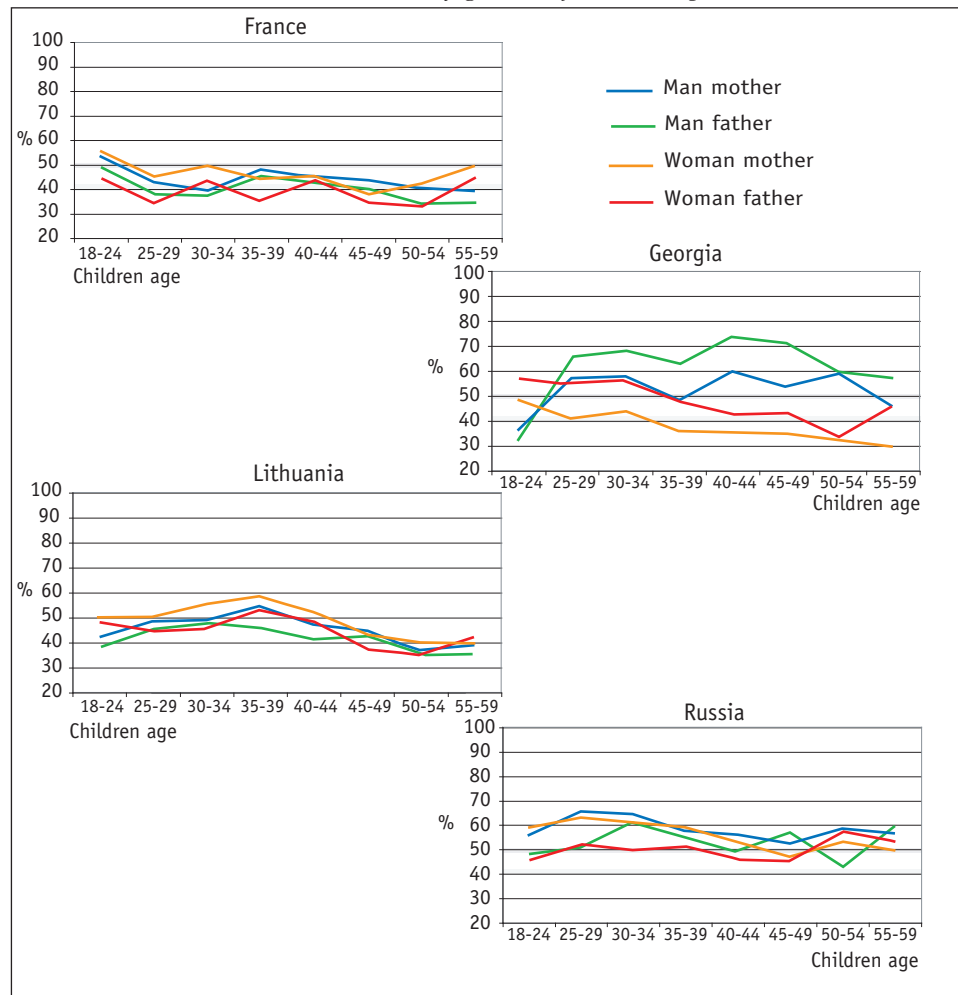
FIGURE 5  
*Proportions of men and women living with at least one of their parents or their partner's parents. By marital situation.*



Sources: Generations and Gender Surveys (see Appendix 1)

FIGURE 6

*Proportion of children with at least one parent alive who visit their parents at least once a week, by gender of child and parent.*



Sources: Generations and Gender Surveys (see Appendix 1)

The developments monitored from the first cohorts to those of the 1980s, who had just ended their education, display major transformations, with in France, a shorter period, or even reversal, between the end of education or first job, leaving the parental home and birth of the first child. The stability of the age at leaving the parental home and of formation of a union contrasts with the rapid increase in age at the birth of the first child and the slow but regular increase in age at the end of education and access to the labour market. This dissociation between stages is not observed in the other countries: only the birth of the first child is moving away from

the other stages in Russia and Lithuania, and then only for men. Georgia is characterised by a close association and concentration of all the stages<sup>14</sup>. The highly gendered and recent nature of the dissociation for men of the birth of the first child and the other life stages is the consequence of economic changes rather than any modification in people's aspirations or deeply held attitudes. The collapse of a paternalistic State has forced men to wait for a certain stability of employment and a later stage in their careers before forming a family<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.3 MULTIPLE PATTERNS OF COUPLE FORMATION AND DISSOLUTION

The patterns of couple formation demonstrate this strange combination of the marks left by a shared Soviet past, which hampered the development of new types of cohabitation, and the real anthropological distance between the four countries under study. More evidence, when one examines the transformations of recent years, of the forms of "conservatism" and change that express themselves differently between France and Russia on the one hand and Lithuania and Georgia on the other.

In all four countries, marriage is no longer necessarily the pattern for the first union. In France, this change to an extension of informal unions as a first passage towards life as a couple goes back a long way. As early as the 1960s, the number of marriages began to fall. In Russia, this did not happen until the end of the 1970s. Marriage was then increasingly replaced by the formation of an informal union. The contrast between these two countries and Lithuania and Georgia is striking. It was not until much later, after the collapse of the USSR, that informal unions as a first step before marriage began to spread among the Lithuanian and Georgian populations. In the latter two countries, membership of the Soviet Union, which hampered the development of these informal unions, was combined with a deeper social dimension, meaning that marriage still remains the most legitimate form of union. This comparison between norms inherited from the political regime and those issuing from society strongly influenced marital behaviour in Georgia and Lithuania.

14. The sharp rise in age at leaving home in the late 1990s was due to a reform of military service. See the article in this issue by Arnaud Régnier-Loilier, Irina Badurashvili and Shorrena Tsiklauri.

15. See the article in this issue by Oxana Sinyavskaya and Ariane Pailhé.

FIGURE 7  
“Entrance into adult life” – median age at various stages of adult life by male and female cohorts

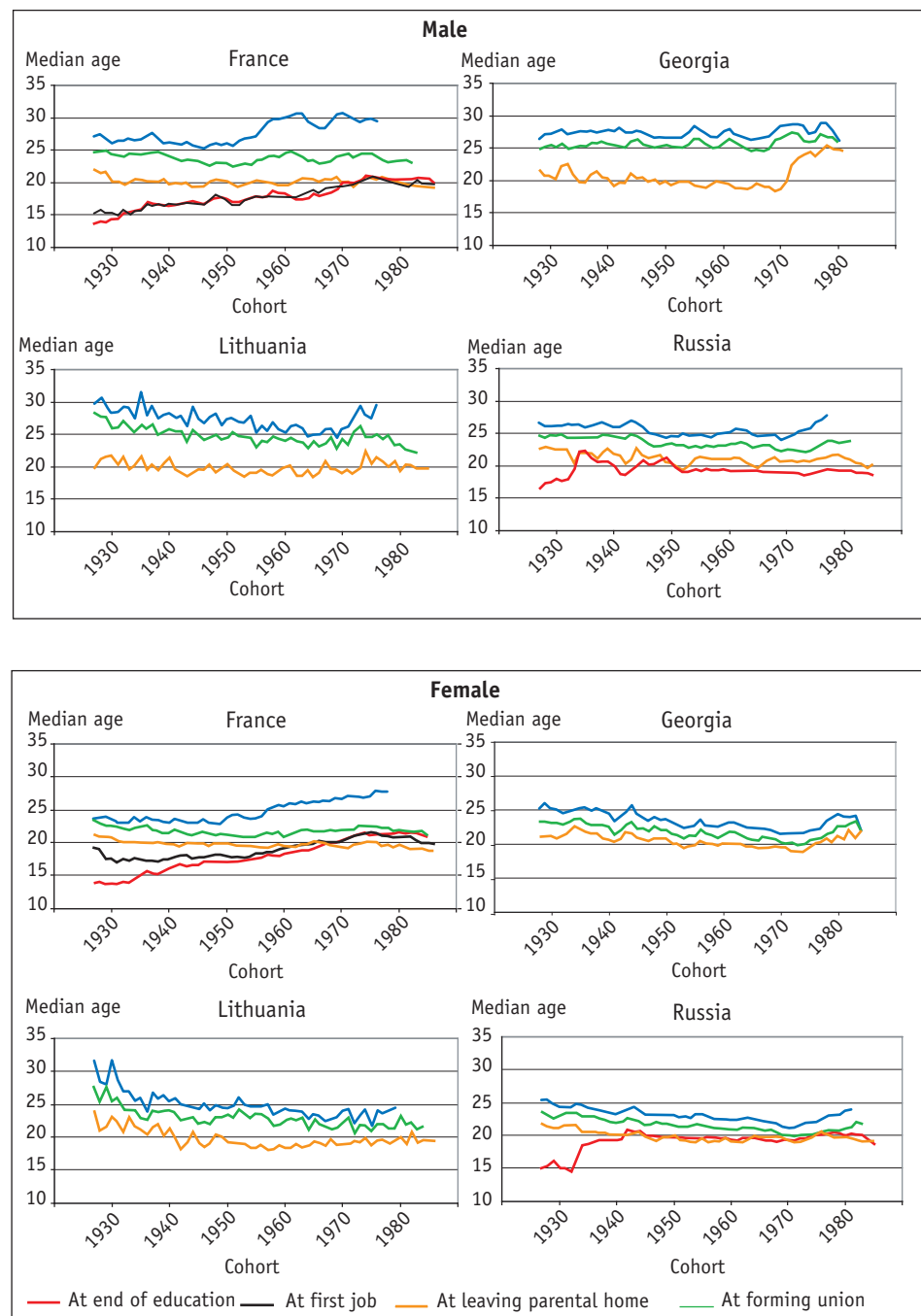


FIGURE 8  
Proportion of marriages preceded by an informal union, by marriage cohort

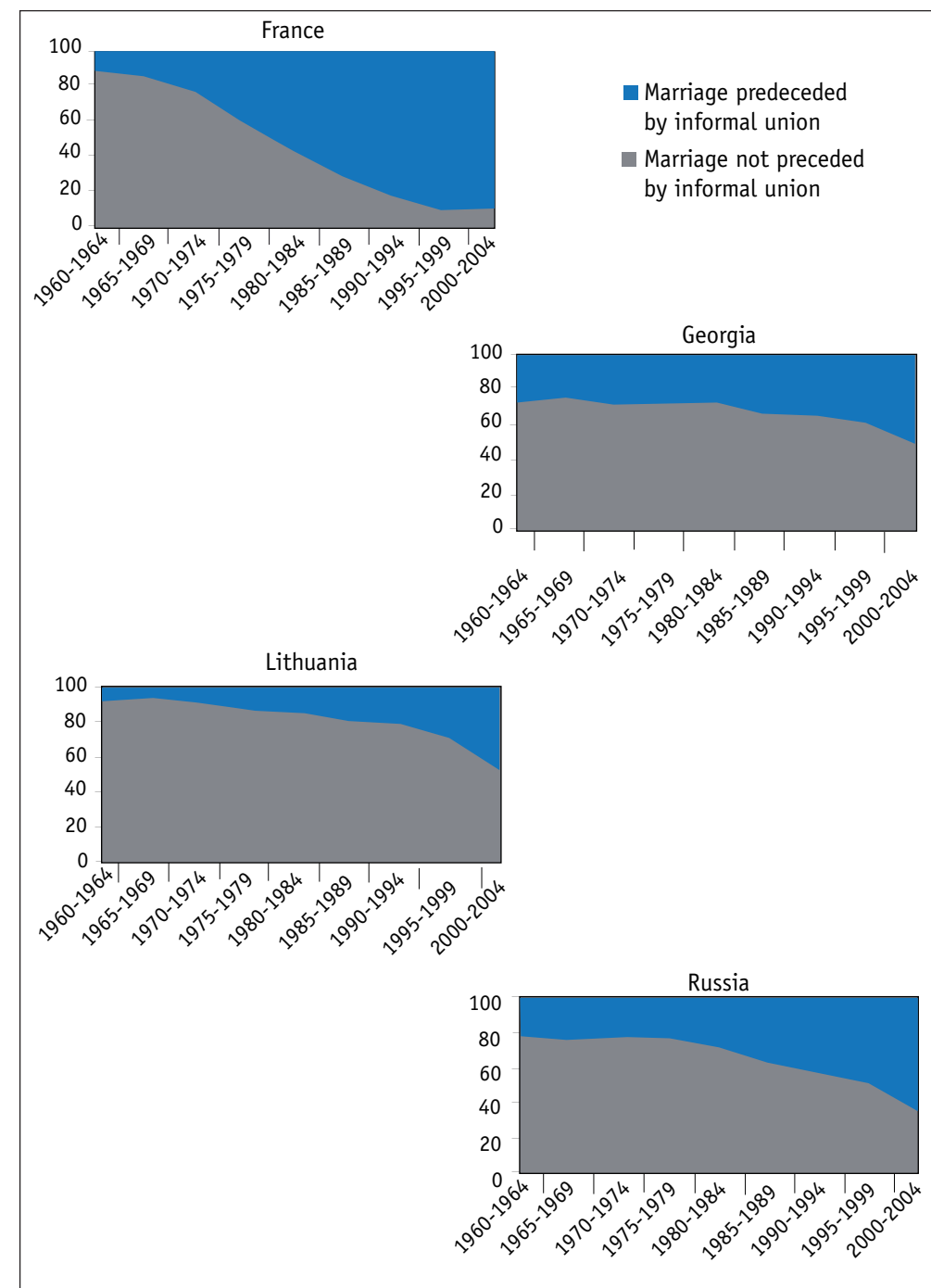


FIGURE 9  
*Proportion of men (women) living with a partner, having a non-resident partner, or with no partner, by age*

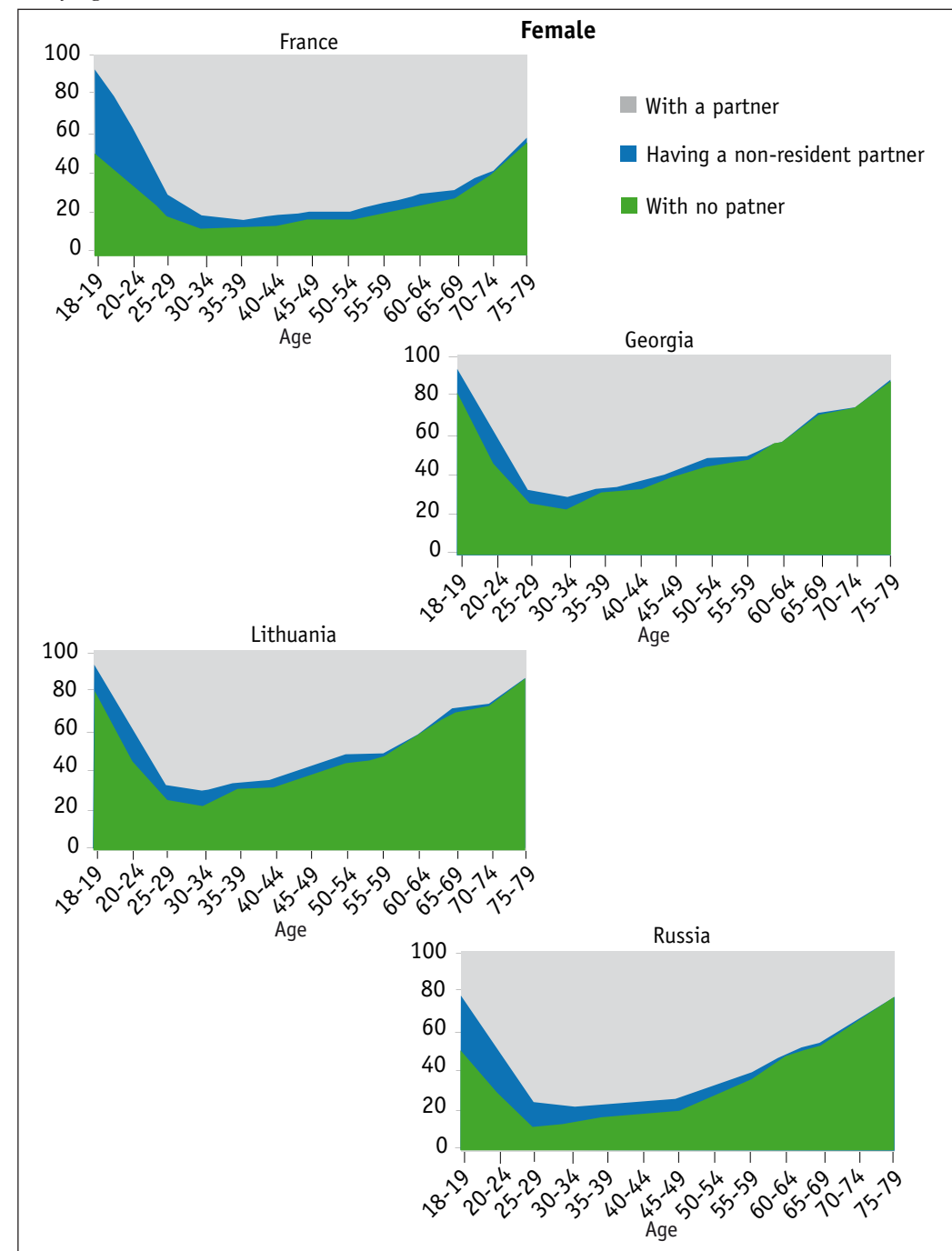
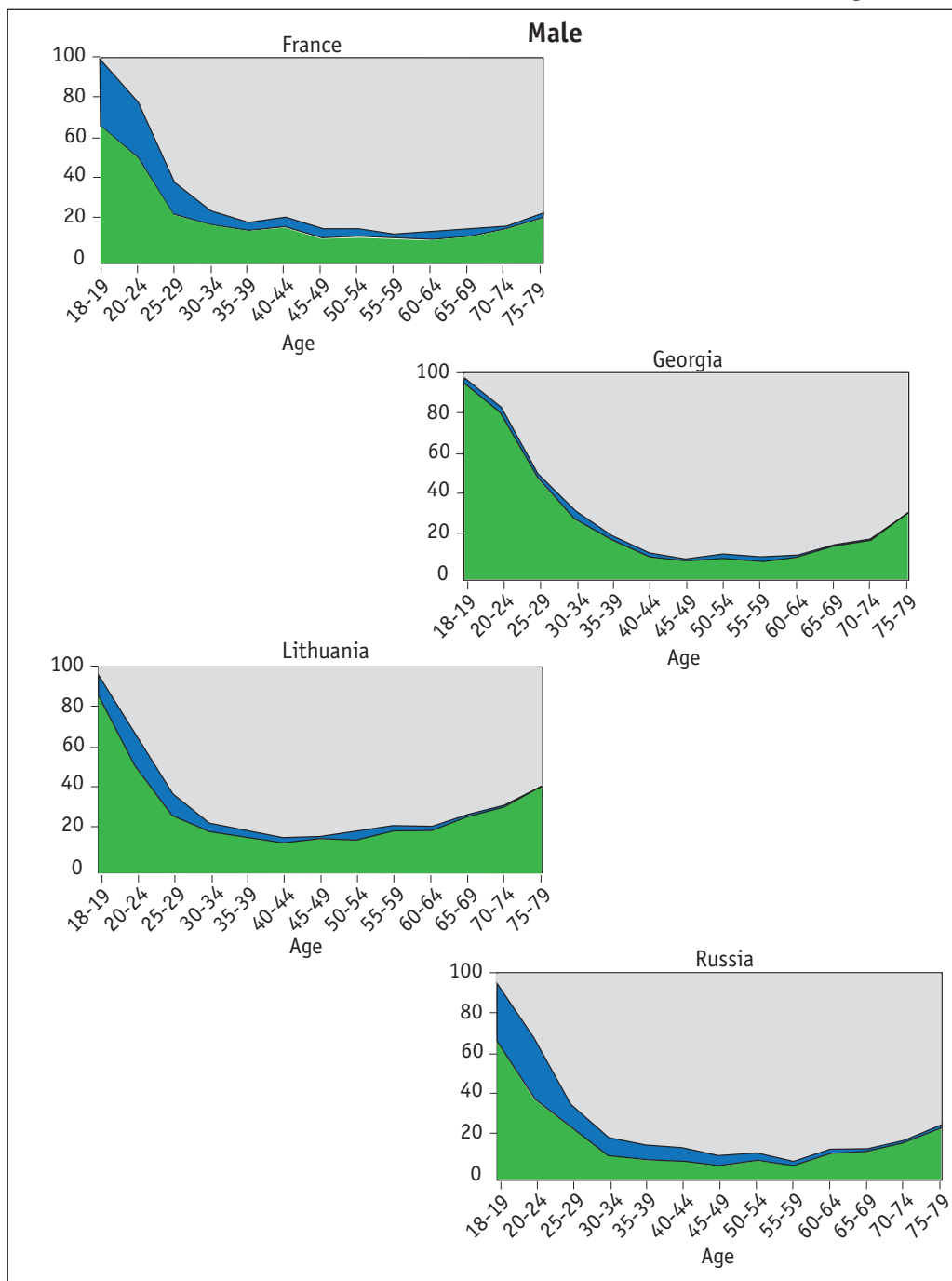
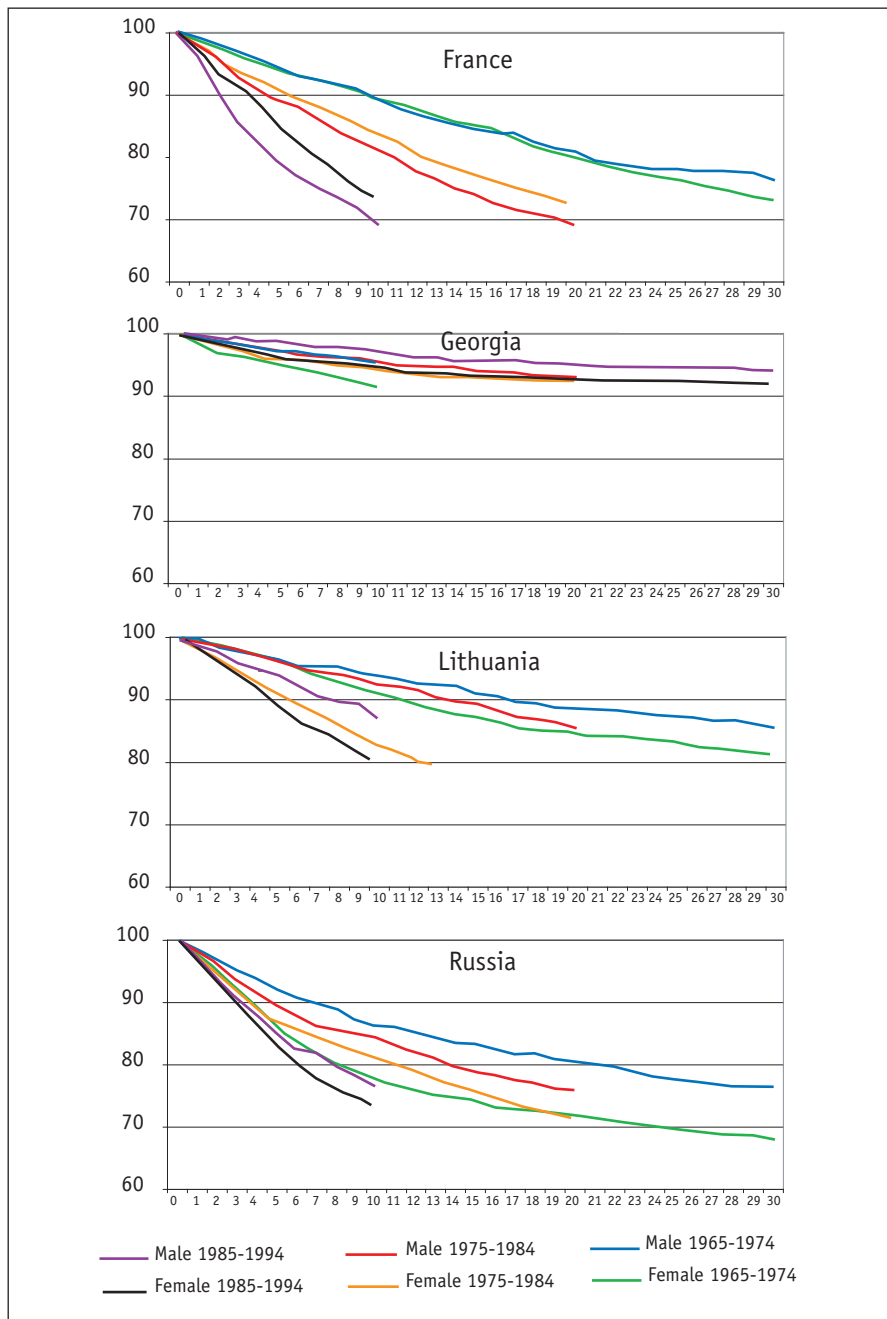




FIGURE 10  
*Union survival rate by sex and year of union  
(per 100 unions formed in given year).*



In Russia, on the other hand, the match between political change and marital behaviour quickly led, on the collapse of the USSR, to the emergence of informal unions as a first stage before marriage. These demographic changes in Russia reflect the lifting of a constraint that the Soviet socio-political and economic model imposed on the population's marital behaviour.

The persistence in Lithuania and Georgia of a socio-cultural model in which marriage remains a central institution is confirmed by the slow development in these countries of models of declared partnership without cohabitation and the late timing of the formation of couples, usually in the form of marriage. The expression of what we may call "conservatism", namely the persistence of values attached to the institution of marriage, is much stronger in these two countries.

They appear to be two quite different types of society. One is represented by France and Russia. Here the institution of marriage is defined as a recognition by the State of the forms of relationship that form a family, and it is no longer the core of family relationships. The other type, where marriage remains a "pillar" of society, can be seen in Lithuania, still underpinned by Catholicism, and in Georgia, where marriage is the expression of the patriarchal and hierarchical patterns of family relationships.

The nature of marital behaviour in France does not mean that the State plays no role in supporting families. On the contrary, the State is seen as having an intrinsic duty to provide the resources needed to form a family, whatever its institutional form. The widespread nature of births out of wedlock demonstrates that the legitimisation of a union by marriage is an individual and private matter and not the expression of specific family models. The involvement of the State, however, is largely desired by the population, whether in child-care or education<sup>16</sup>. In Russia the situation is perhaps more ambiguous, and one cannot really decide between two hypotheses. One is that, as in France, a long tradition of a welfare state has been assimilated by the population, even where there is inadequate family policy. The other is that the Russian model is a classical liberal one that separates matters concerning the family, left to the private sphere, from public affairs, which are the responsibility of the State. The extent of inter-generational transfers and the attitude towards the care one should give one's elderly parents would appear to validate the second hypothesis of a classical liberal model in which the absence of State intervention and the insufficient aid it provides for the population need to be replaced by families<sup>17</sup>.

16. See the article in this issue by Cécile Lefèvre, Lidia Prokofieva, Irina Korchaguina, Vlada Stankuniene, Margarita Gedvilaite, Irina Badurashvili and Mariam Sirbiladze.

17. *Ibidem*.

Union dissolutions are sharply marked by strictly demographic characteristics and anthropological criteria (Figure 10). Demographic structure plays an important role in these dissolutions. Large early excess mortality among males in Russia and Lithuania inevitably leads to a structural imbalance between men and women, with the latter being widowed earlier. Family isolation is thus sharply differentiated between men and women (Figure 9). In France, union dissolutions are more synchronous between men and women, because they are mainly due not to death but separation (Figure 10). On the other hand, separation clearly marks out France and Russia from the other two, with a great similarity in extent and changes over time: at present only 70% of unions in France last ten years; in Russia the figure is slightly higher. Lithuania and Georgia are different. Unions are more stable and dissolutions less frequent, particularly in Georgia. Georgian patriarchal framework and family control and the importance of religion in Lithuania once more find expression, marking a contrast with France and Russia.

### 3.4. VALUES AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Examination of attitudes towards the family, gender relations and homosexuality also reveals a combination of persistent models from different systems, and the rapid changes experienced by the population in all four countries.

Attitudes to homosexuality have radically altered. Although a majority of cohorts born in Russia in the 1930s disapprove of homosexual behaviour<sup>18</sup>, only a minority of the younger cohorts born in the early 1980s still do. The figures shift from over 70% of men and women born in 1930 disapproving of equal rights to one man in two and two women in five born in 1980. The attitude of the various cohorts also differs in France, where results are similar to Russia. But they are much more numerous in accepting equal treatment. Only one man in five and one woman in ten born in 1980 strongly disapprove of equal rights. Of those born in 1930, more than half did so. Lithuania falls between the two, although the downward trend is similar to the first two countries. Only Georgia is distinguished by strong disapproval with little change between cohorts.

More generally, the holding of certain values reveals gender relations within society and the family. The relations are changing in different ways and there are sharp contrasts between the four countries under study. For example, the specialisation of mainly female tasks in housework has hardly changed in Russia, while change has been extremely rapid in France, and similar, if slower, in Lithuania. When asked "Please tell me who does the following tasks in your household?" fewer than one-third of Frenchwomen

born in the 1980s said that they were the only ones to do such tasks as cooking, buying food, housework and organising the household's social life. Proportions are higher in Lithuania, but the trend is similar. In Russia, on the other hand, 80% of women state that they alone do the cooking, and in Georgia there is a definite stability, although there has been a surprising decline in this figure in the most recent years. In Georgia, this is probably due to men's much greater economic control over women, who are thus dependent and not those who acquire consumer goods. Georgian women appear to be restricted to the domestic sphere and largely absent from the public sphere, including the acquisition of household goods.

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The history of families in the second half of the 20th century reveals a diversity that does not merely correspond to the division between Eastern and Western Europe, or to anthropological features rooted in earlier history. It is affected by trends that involve the whole of Europe, beginning in some countries in the late 1960s and in others in the early 1980s: marriage is no longer virtually the sole sign of a stable union; the various stages in entering adulthood are no longer automatically connected, with an apparently natural succession of completing education, leaving home, first job, forming a union and birth of the first child. Although age at leaving home appears fairly stable, as one gains independence from one's parents, probably expressing a social representation of adulthood that is firmly entrenched, the other stages no longer occur in the same order and are not connected in the same fashion. These changes are probably most marked in France and only just beginning in the formerly Soviet countries. But signs of a dispersal of these stages can be seen elsewhere too.

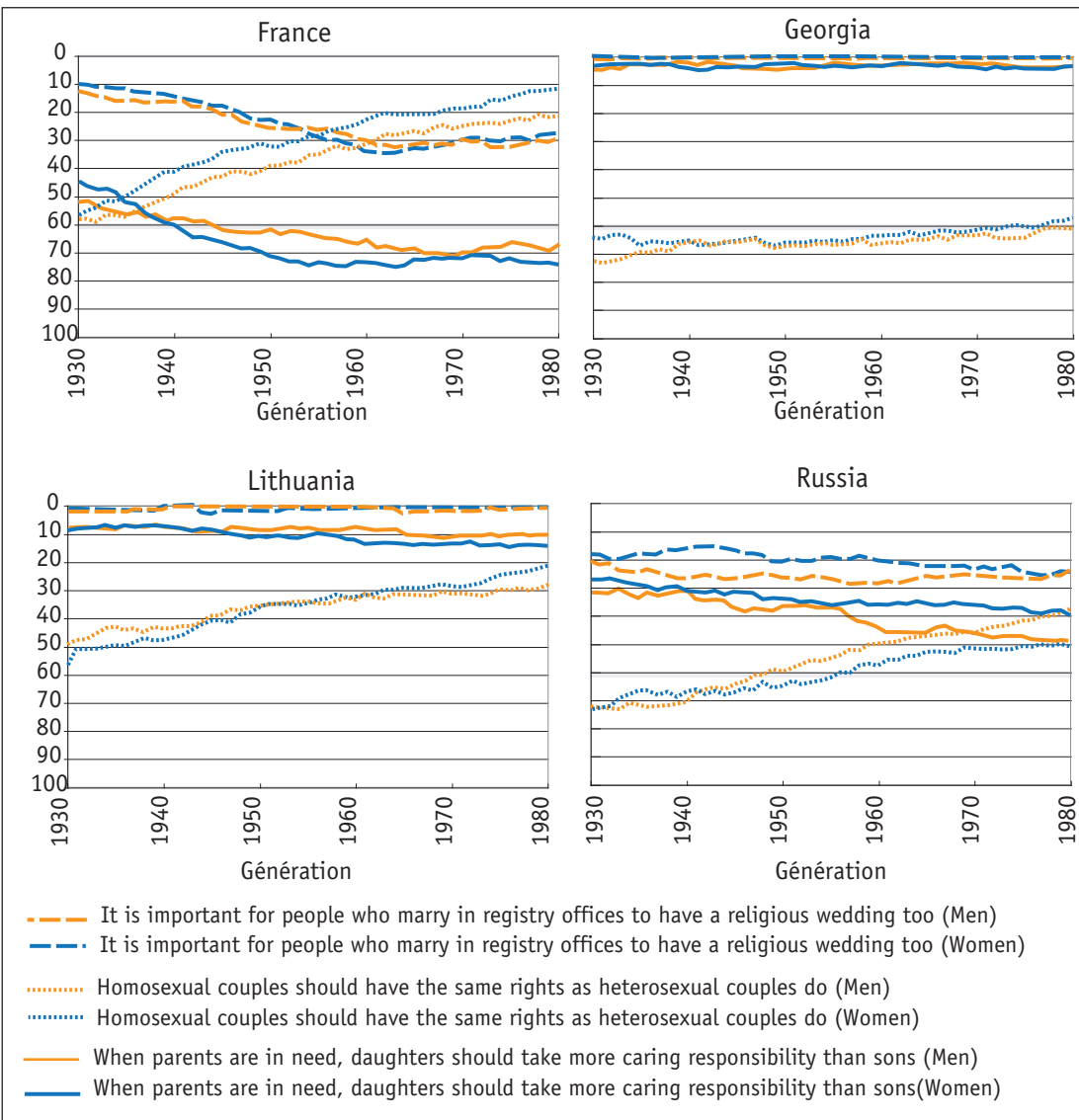
These changes began at various dates in the four countries under study, but have all been significant. Which is not to say that the new political, economic and social reshaping of Europe will lead to a single pattern, a European family, with no traces of its recent past, earlier history, or cultural factors. On the contrary, the most important choices the individual faces, marriage or informal union, birth of a first child, less connected now with marriage or forming a couple, leave room, perhaps more than before, for the expression of a marked cultural and anthropological diversity, within the general pattern we have described. Policy decisions, however, remain determining factors, not in modifying these major trends but in adapting them. Finally, the traces of past membership of quite specific political areas remain, even if they are already fading.

This introduction and the articles that follow, examining in greater detail aspects touched on above, provide no predictions about what the European family of the future will be. But they do show the diversity of choices available for contemporary families, making them without doubt

18. More exactly, these cohorts consider that homosexual couples should not have the same rights as heterosexual couples.

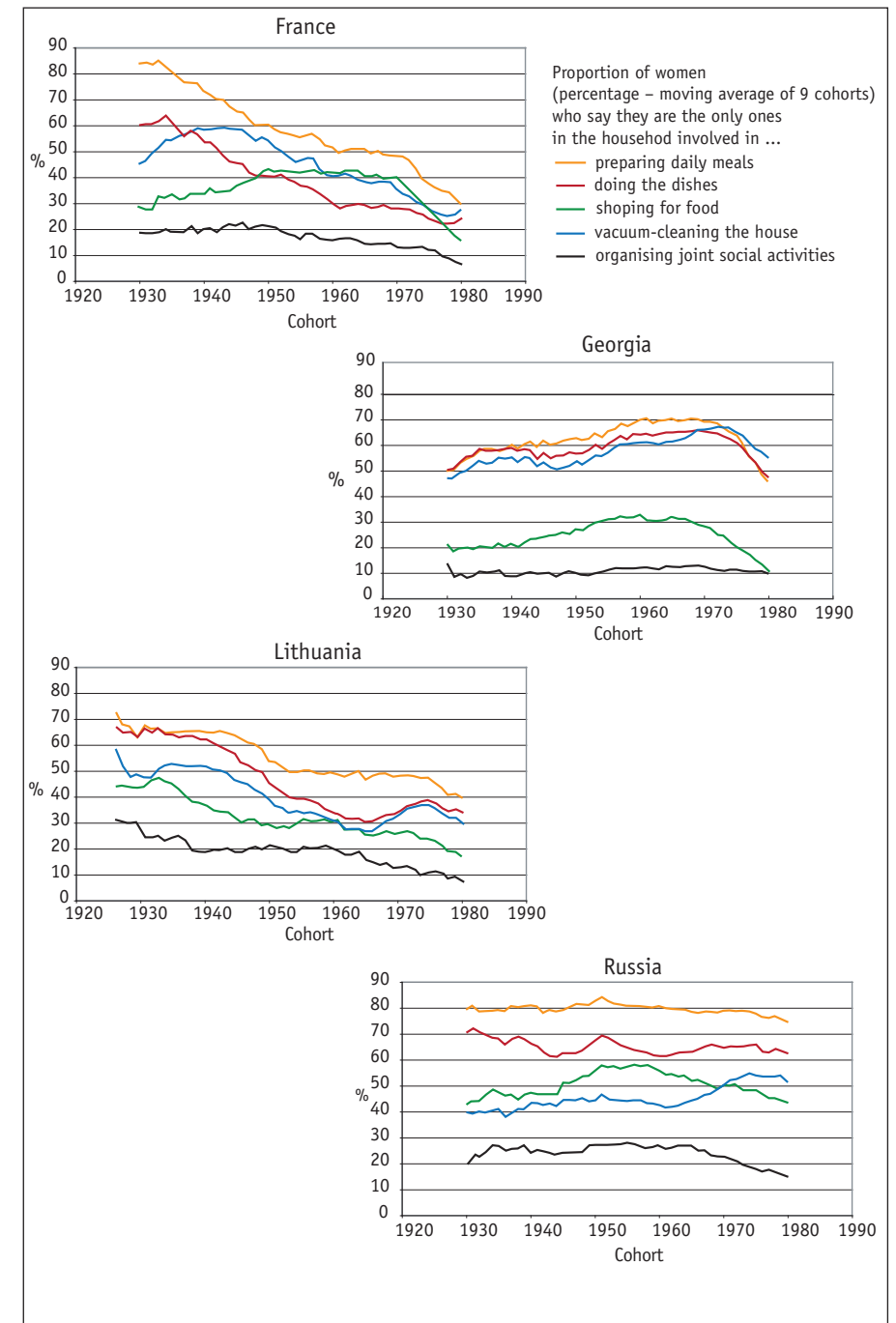
more sensitive to external changes, whether socio-economic or political. One may suppose that the family will retain a central place in modern society, with many variations across the diverse regions of Europe, variations in the types of support and solidarity for family members, the timing of entering adulthood, and expectations from the State.

FIGURE 11  
*Values — attitudes to homosexuality, religious marriage  
and support for parents*



N.B.: inverted vertical scale

FIGURE 12  
*Gender values – attitude to sexual differentiation of housework tasks*



## Appendix 1

Synthèse de la réalisation des enquêtes GGS de la première vague en France, Russie, Géorgie et Lituanie.

### Annexe 2

Plan du questionnaire de référence (*core questionnaire*)

1. *Ménage* : description du logement, liste des membres du ménage, sexe, date de naissance et liens entre eux.

2. *Enfants* : répartition des tâches parentales, mode de garde des enfants et coûts, description des enfants non présents dans le ménage (enfants non cohabitants, enfants décédés, beaux-enfants).

3. *Conjoints* : précisions sur le conjoint actuel, cohabitant ou non, statut matrimonial, intentions de se marier ou de vivre avec un conjoint dans les trois années à venir, mode de vie, histoires conjugales passées.

4. *Organisation du ménage et caractéristiques du couple* : répartition des tâches domestiques, prise de décisions au sein du couple, entente entre les conjoints, gestion des désaccords.

5. *Parents et foyer parental* : enfance, mode de vie des parents du répondant, départ du foyer parental, fréquence des contacts parents-enfants, fratrie du répondant, grands-parents.

6. *Fécondité* : grossesses en cours, planification des naissances, méthodes contraceptives, difficultés à avoir des enfants, intentions de fécondité, influence de l'entourage sur la décision d'avoir d'autres enfants, préférence quant au sexe des enfants.

7. *Santé et bien-être* : maladie ou handicap, difficultés au quotidien, aides reçues ou données, soutien psychologique, bien-être moral.

8. *Activité et revenus du répondant* : profession, horaires de travail, régularité du travail, satisfaction et intentions de changer d'emploi, de prendre sa retraite.

9. *Activité et revenus du conjoint* : profession, temps de travail, régularité du travail.

10. *Biens du ménage, revenus et héritages* : biens et revenus de l'ensemble du ménage, possession de biens spécifiques, aisance matérielle, transferts intra et intergénérationnels, aides et allocations reçues, possibilité d'épargner.

11. *Valeurs et attitudes* : religion, opinions sur la famille, sur les relations entre ses membres et sur les relations de genre dans la famille et la société, opinions sur la politique et sur la religion.

### Sites :

[www-erfi.ined.fr](http://www-erfi.ined.fr)

[www.unecce.org/pau/ggp/materials.htm](http://www.unecce.org/pau/ggp/materials.htm)